

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez (CA-47) today issued the following statement regarding Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech on the importance of internet freedom, particularly in countries like Vietnam:

"Yesterday in her speech on the importance of internet freedom, Secretary Clinton referred to the 'freedom to connect,' both in person and online. She discussed how many regimes, including the one in Vietnam, restrict civil and political liberties as a means of stifling their critics and suppressing dissent. She called for an end to politically-motivated censorship, and pledged U.S. support for citizens, journalists, and bloggers who exercise their fundamental right to free speech. I applaud Secretary Clinton for her important message and urge others to take up her call.

"But I still remain concerned by the State Department's lukewarm response to human rights violations in Vietnam. While I think Secretary Clinton's remarks are certainly a step in the right direction, particularly for free speech advocates, there are other human rights abuses that still need to be addressed. For example, Vietnamese officials continue to persecute people of faith and desecrate churches and other religious artifacts. Despite these abuses, the U.S. still has not put Vietnam back on its Countries of Particular Concern list.

"It has become evident over the past several months that the human rights situation in Vietnam will continue to deteriorate. Just yesterday, four Vietnamese democracy activists, including Le Cong Dinh, were sentenced to prison for speaking out against the country's Communist regime. While my colleagues and I can, and will, continue to call on Vietnam to end these sham trials and expand fundamental freedoms, I am doubtful that the government will make these changes on its own. The U.S. and international communities must take concrete action to compel Vietnam to recognize and respect the rights of its people."

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